



WHAT IS GRASS?

Grass is the most common plant in the world and grows all over Ireland. It provides food for many animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and horses. In order to help it grow, grass is fertilised with manure (animal dung) or chemical fertilisers. Grass grows best in spring and summer, and its growth depends on heat and rainfall. This extra grass is cut and preserved as **hay** or **silage** to feed animals during the winter.

To make hay, the grass is cut with a rotary mower and left to dry in the sun. It is then collected and made into **bales**. Haymaking requires fine weather and, if too wet, it cannot be used to feed the animals.

To make silage, grass is cut and then covered in plastic, leaving no room for air. Under the plastic, the grass becomes 'pickled'. This preserves the grass so that it can be kept for years. Silage is either kept in large **round bales** that are easy to transport or it is kept in a **silage pit**. Good weather is not required for silage making. Silage can also be made from cereal crops like barley, oats and wheat.

WHAT ARE CEREALS?

Cereals are types of grass with grains that can be eaten or used to make food. The main cereals grown in Ireland are wheat, oats and barley. Their seeds, which are called grains, are used to feed animals and to make food such as bread and porridge. Each fully-grown cereal plant is made up of ears, leaves and stalks. The ear can also be known as the 'head' and is the upper part that contains the grains.



WHEAT

Wheat is one type of cereal. Each ear of wheat normally contains fifty-four grains. Wheat grains are particularly important because they are used to make **flour**, which can be used in baking. It is also used to make breakfast cereals, bread, pasta, biscuits, cakes and pizza bases.

OATS

Oats are used in **porridge** and in **muesli**. They can also be used to make flapjacks and biscuits.

BARLEY

Barley is used in the production of beer, whiskey and malt vinegar. It can also be used to make breakfast cereals.

RICE

Rice does not grow in Ireland but it is an important cereal. Rice needs heat and a lot of water to grow. It is grown in many countries but is generally associated with countries of East and Southeast Asia where it is grown in fields called paddy fields. This name comes from the Malaysian word 'padi' which means 'growing rice'. Rice can be eaten as part of a main meal or it can be used to make products such as rice krispies, rice cakes and rice desserts etc.

MAIZE

Some maize (corn) is grown in Ireland but this is generally used to feed animals. The maize that we eat comes from other countries. There are lots of different types of maize – from sweetcorn to popcorn – and maize can be used to make corn flakes and other breakfast cereals.

